

# Singita



## WILDLIFE JOURNAL SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA For the month of March, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five

### Temperature

Average minimum: 20.4°C (68.7°F)  
Minimum recorded: 18.0°C (64.4°F)  
Average maximum: 30.0°C (86.0°F)  
Maximum recorded: 34.0°C (93.2°F)

### Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 16.7 mm  
Season to date: 293 mm

### Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:02  
Sunset: 17:53

There's a certain charm about exploring the South African lowveld in this the month of fall. Changes slowly creep in to our environment with emerald greens fading to warm earthy tones as periods between downpours grow further apart. Light jumpers now join the early morning safaris to take the chill off the wind, while sipping on a warm beverage close at hand. We mimic the African green pigeons basking in the early morning sun and listen to the distant sounds like a pride of lion preparing for a patrol through their territory. The more we explore and understand the more we realise we are part of this functioning ecosystem and our role is greater than ever. We find similarities in our beautiful, natural world which brings with it a flurry of emotions and

feelings. We encourage you to “let yourself go” on a safari and connect with what is around you. Here is how we connected with the wildlife, this month of March.

### **Elephants**

- There has been an abundance of elephants seen in all corners of Singita Sabi Sand of late with many sightings recorded along the stretch of the Sand River. Elephants, being particularly fussy on the quality of water they drink, have shown a preference for the flowing water in the river, while standing water has been used for that all important mudbath for cooling off and insect control. We expect the herds to stay in the area for the whole of the dry season to come.

### **Buffaloes**

- In the south the watering holes have attracted the buffalo herds as they now start to graze further each day in search of enough food. The southern grasslands have had a lot to offer our guests with zebra and other grassland species often mixed among the buffalo herd. The gabbro rich grasslands show the scars of the large bovines as prominent game paths bisect the feeding grounds straight to the water. These are the very same trail's guides and trackers lead their guests on during bush walks, a surreal experience walking in the footsteps of untamed nature.

### **Cheetahs**

- Conditions have been ideal for cheetah of late. The long grass allows them to move undetected in the grasslands. Although sightings have been far less this month, we have still managed to view the territorial male in the south from time to time. One occasion it was in fact a leopard that led us to a cheetah as the Ntomi male caught the attention of a cheetah resting next to a bush.

### **Leopards**

- We have seen a few new leopards moving into the south as the dynamics start to shift. The Nkuwa female, who now has cubs stashed somewhere, possibly in Tavangumi Koppies, has been exploring far less of her vast territory. There is a young female as well as a male that we've had brief sightings of. These two leopards are both nervous and will take some time to trust our vehicles.
- As the Thamba male shifts east we have had regular viewing of this big male throughout the south as well as the low-lying areas across the Sand River. He was seen mating with a skittish female leopard at the start of the month.
- Despite the persistent pressure from the Thamba male, Ntomi is still a regular face in the south east, and he's not backing down from the big male. While on patrol he can be heard rasping in display.
- To the north the Hlambela male covers most of this area. He was recently seen hunting white-faced ducks at Tom's Dam, in fact this is how he earned his ID name, “The one who likes to swim” due to his skill of hunting ducks in small ponds.

### **Lion**

- As the grasses grow tall we have noticed an increase in zebra predation by lions. The Mhangeni Pride has been focusing a lot of their hunting on the dazzles of zebra that can be found throughout the reserve especially in the more wooded savanna. The pride consists of three adult lionesses, three sub-adult females and the last remaining young male.
- We have been treated to sightings of the Othawa Pride and their two new cubs with the adults providing frequent meals for them, including warthog and waterbuck.
- The Ximungwe Pride is also having much success along the Sand River. This pride has the potential to grow to what it once was.
- The Nkuhuma Breakaway sister and brother continue to fly under the radar between some of the bigger prides in the area. The young male providing important security for his sister against hyenas during feeding time.

- The Tsalala lioness and Nkuhuma and Talamati males have also been seen on a regular basis.

#### **African wild dogs**

- The Othawa Pack and the split from the Tulon Pack have been the two groups of wild dogs making up the sightings this March. As the impala grow older and stronger the packs are having to work hard and move further to chase down their prey.

#### **Birds**

- As we move further toward the colder dry season the summer migrants move back to areas all over the world, from central and north Africa, Europe and Asia. Although our total still sits at 251 species since the start of 2025 we have had great birdlife. We have had some purely bird-orientated guests of late with a set of guests recording 152 species in a four-night safari! A commendable effort for this time of year.

**Some exciting and informative Bush Stories follow, as well as the March Gallery of images.**

## Most incredible walking safari

Article by Coman Mnisi

We had a couple that stayed with us at Singita Ebony for five nights, at the beginning of March. It was a first time safari experience for them, every single thing was mind blowing, and we saw beautiful sightings. However, it came to a point where they were satisfied with what they experienced while driving, and decided they'd like to accept the offer of a walking safari.

On this beautiful morning we decided to do a bit of a drive until sunrise, and then start walking. We stopped to prepare ourselves somewhere close to the airstrip to start walking. Within five minutes of the walk we spotted tracks of a mating pair of leopards the tracks appeared to be very fresh. I explained to them that it was a good thing that we were walking because if it means that if the leopards were actively mating we would hear the growls of them doing so.

We only walked for about 20 metres from where we first saw the tracks and we heard a loud grunting noise coming from the same direction as the rising sun. From our position we couldn't see anything but the sound was not far. Because we were not too sure of where the sound came from exactly, we then had to carry on with our walk and leave the area. It took us about 45 minutes to return back to the game viewer and when we finally got back to the vehicle we started searching for that mating pair we heard earlier. Luckily they didn't move far from where we first heard them growling and we found them - it was one of the most beautiful leopard sightings to watch.



After that day the same two leopards were seen again two days in a row doing the same activity, and we followed them until they separated at the end of the mating period.

Today, I would like to share with you information about African buffalos and their natural habitat. These buffalos are enormous and formidable bovids with a reputation for a dangerously moody temperament and being the most aggressive member of the Big Five. Lions and humans are their only predators.

One of the top African animals to see in the Lowveld, buffalos are bulk grazers, they prefer long grass hence they do take small amount of browse in times of drought.

They have a wide range of habitat. Wherever there is suitable forage, access to water, and shade, it will be the most preferred area. The gestation period for buffalo is 11 months, and their life expectancy is over 25 years, depending on the individual buffalo.

They have excellent senses, although their sight and hearing are less developed. However, their sense of smell is highly developed, which they rely on to find food or detect predators. Buffaloes also use smell to communicate socially, and vocal communication is also significant.

Buffaloes emit caw-like bellows continuously as they move along to maintain contact.

Buffaloes show only moderate sexual dimorphism. Older bulls are black and often covered with dried mud from wallowing. They also have massive horns with bosses that meet in the middle, forming an enormous helmet used in fights. Female buffaloes have narrower horns and fewer bosses. Both sexes have large, hairy ears that hang down below the horns.

The advantage of rank within the herd is that more dominant individuals feed ahead and in the centre of the herd, avoiding trampled grass. This privileged position also affords these animals the best protection from predators. Ranked bulls benefit from better access to oestrous females.

Old buffalo bulls that have passed their reproductive peak are usually found alone or in small groups. These individuals often have skin ailments or old battle wounds, and at that time, they lack protection from the herd. As a result, they are more susceptible to attacks from lions. Buffalo bulls are well known to be extremely temperamental and dangerous if approached by humans on foot.

Buffalo bulls test the reproductive status of cows through the flehmen response, where urine particles are pumped into the Jacobson's organ on the palate to detect the presence of steroid hormones. Buffaloes usually mate and calve during the rainy season, when there is a lot of highly nutritious green grass to sustain the lactating cows. Cows will give birth in the presence of the herd.

Sometimes buffaloes will wallow in mud to keep themselves cool during the hottest part of the day. This activity is mostly practiced by the bulls, and it also plays a role in dominance displays. Buffaloes are gregarious and live in herds, often numbering in the hundreds.

These are the snippets I wish to share with you regarding the mostly feared yet fascinating animal in the African wilderness.



## Who says lizards can't fish?

Article by Marc Bowes-Taylor

I love the natural world and it's always tough to say which part of it I enjoy the most. However, there are two aspects I really do love, and they will never be out of the top five, and that's fishing and reptiles. So you can imagine when the two come together in one moment it brings up a sense of euphoria with which little can compare (except the birth of my daughter, and my partnership with my lovely wife).

How does a reptile fish? I'm not referring to a brown water snake hunting in the shallows nor a crocodile waiting at the base of a rapid. My euphoria exploding moment happened watching a water monitor using its tail to school fish in a shallow pool.

The Sand River had dropped and a pool of water was all that was left in a small depression on the edge of the river valley. To our amazement this tiny isolated bit of water held so much life. As we turned the corner, we saw a saddle-billed stork fly off with a hammerkop following closely behind. Straight away I killed the ignition knowing that I had unintentionally disturbed the scene. But it wasn't totally still. There was movement on the surface. I picked up the binoculars and guided my guests to look closer, a water monitor was there in this pool. They tend to be shy reptiles but this one didn't want to leave.



We then observed as it used its tail to try and trap the fish against the bank. Their tail is almost twice as long as their body and quite broad, designed for swimming. This one felt it was well suited for fishing.

We watched as it used the curvature of its body and tail going from one side to the other of the small pan in hopes for fish for an early dinner. With very little success it kept trying like any good fisherman does. We watched in amazement as its never-give-up attitude was keeping the small reptile busy in its will to survive.







## March Gallery



The Nkuwa female pictured above and below, has been a leopard everyone has been watching as she shows signs of lactating. We are certain her litter is stashed on Tavangumi rocks close to Boulders Lodge. Images by Matt Durell and Marc Bowes-Taylor.







The Sand River has been the Go To spot for elephants come mid-morning. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.  
An impala ram on high alert as the Ntomi male leopard patrols a woodland. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.

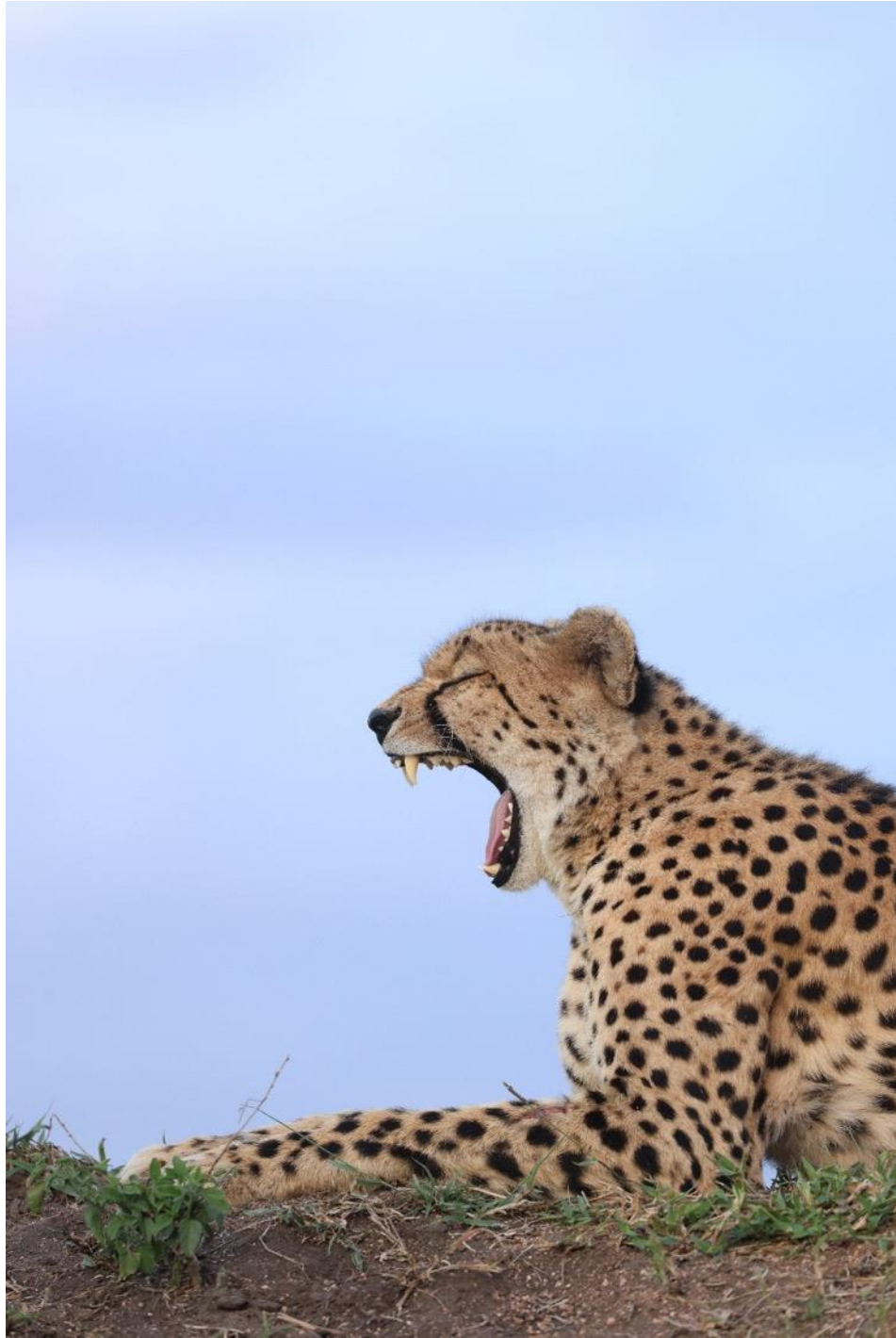






Not all buffalo viewing has been as calm as the scene photographed above. The Mhangeni Pride followed a bull which took to the water in an attempt to escape. However, fatigue and hunger were his downfall. Images by Marc Bowes-Taylor.





The yawn, the stretch, crucial for any sprinter. Image by Matt Durell.





The mud wallow is calling! A sounder of warthogs on their way to get coated in mud before feeding in the heat of the day. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.



The Othawa Pack of wild dogs make sure there aren't any crocodiles waiting for an easy opportunity. Image by Matt Durell.





What makes a full-grown giraffe bull gallop? Not a lion in this case but a rival giraffe bull looking to set the hierarchy straight. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.

A wobble of ostriches cautiously approaching a pan, this is always one of the most vulnerable moments for bird or mammals. Image by Matt Durell.

